



# MessageLabs Intelligence: February 2006

### Introduction

Welcome to the February edition of the MessageLabs Intelligence monthly report. This report provides the latest threat trends for February 2006 to keep you informed in the ongoing fight against viruses, spam and other unwelcome content.

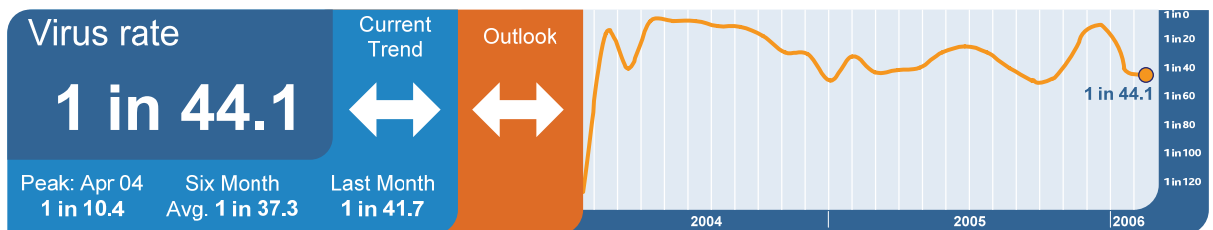
### Global Trends & Content Analysis

MessageLabs Anti-Spam and Anti-Virus Services focus on identifying and averting unwanted communications originating from unknown bad sources and which are addressed to valid email recipients.

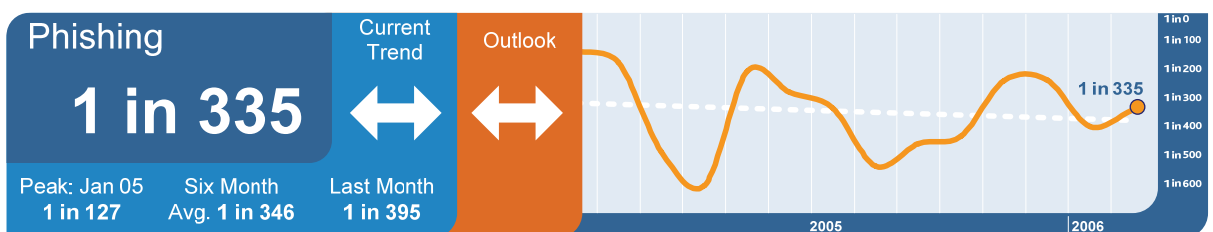
**Spam Protection:** In February, the global ratio of spam in email traffic from new and unknown bad sources, for which the recipient addresses were deemed valid, was 60.6% (1 in 1.65), a drop of 6% on the previous month.



**Anti-Virus and Trojan Protection:** The global ratio of email-borne viruses in email traffic from new and previously unknown bad sources destined for valid recipients, was 1 in 44.1 (2.3%), a decrease of 0.1% since the previous month.



**Phishing:** February shows an increase of 0.05% in the proportion of phishing attacks compared with the previous month. One in 334.9 (0.3%) emails was a phishing attempt, intended for the commission of online identity fraud. The number of phishing attacks has increased by 2.6% as a proportion of all email-borne threats, now accounting for 13.2% of all dangerous emails intercepted by MessageLabs in February.





**Vertical Industry Breakdown**

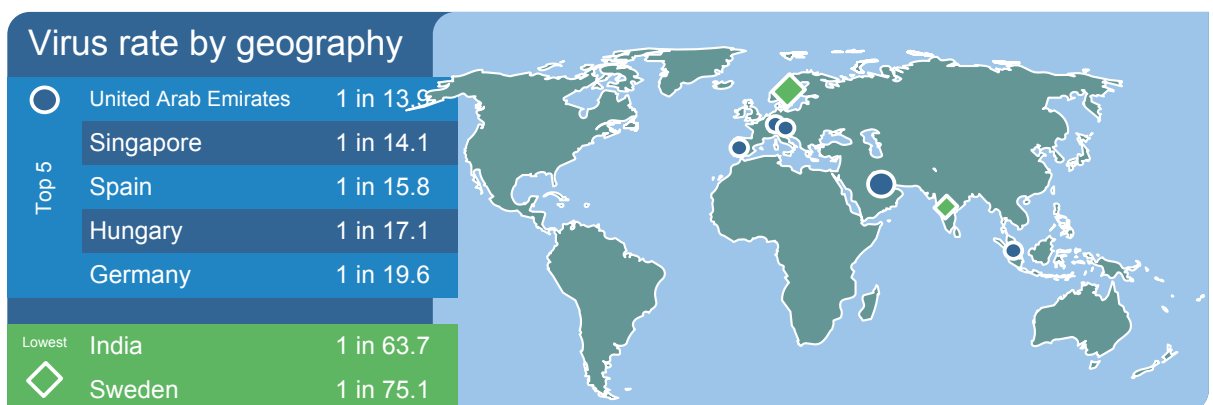
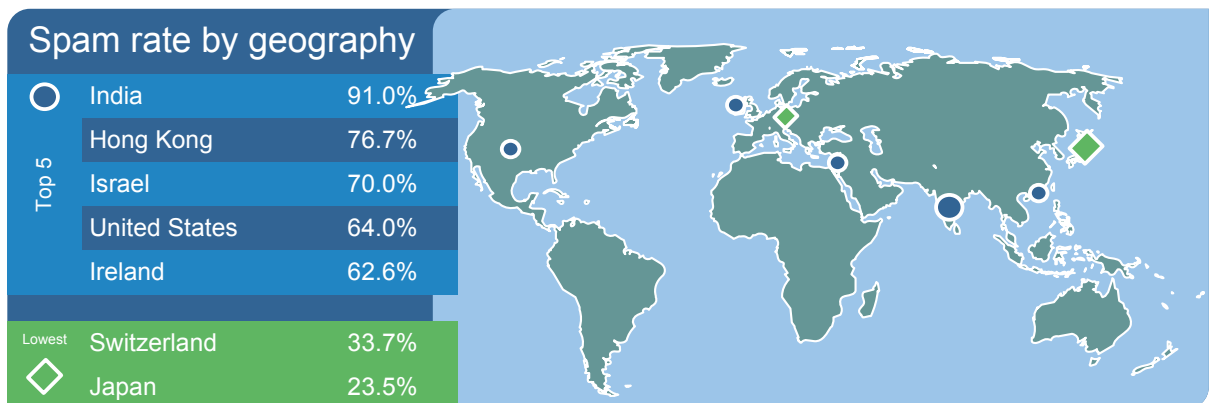
By analyzing the market distribution of email traffic where possible, MessageLabs compiles data that shows the impact and vulnerability rates of spam and viruses specific to major industry sectors. The chart below reflects impacts and ratios for February 2006:

Spam rate by vertical		
Top 5	Recreation	69.4%
	IT Services	68.7%
	Chem/Pharm	68.4%
	Retail	65.0%
	Education	64.1%
Lowest	Gov/Public Sector	43.5%
	Accom/Catering	36.9%

Virus rate by vertical		
Top 5	Business Support Services	1 in 7.6
	Wholesale	1 in 15.7
	Non-Profit	1 in 26.4
	Mineral/Fuel	1 in 29.0
	Accom/Catering	1 in 31.7
Lowest	Chem/Pharm	1 in 71.6
	Telcoms	1 in 132.2

**Geographical Breakdown**

By analyzing the geographical dispersal of email traffic where possible, MessageLabs compiles data that shows the impact and vulnerability rates of spam and viruses specific to geographies. The chart below reflects impact and ratios for February 2006:





**Traffic Management (Protocol Level)**

Traffic Management continues to reduce the overall message volume through techniques operating at the protocol level. Unwanted senders are identified and connections to the mail server are slowed down using features embedded in the TCP protocol. Incoming volumes of known spam are significantly slowed, while ensuring legitimate email is expedited.

**Connection Management**

Connection Management is particularly effective in stopping directory harvest, brute force and email denial of service attacks, where unwanted senders send high volumes of messages to force spam into an organisation or disrupt business communications.

Connection Management works at the SMTP level using techniques that verify legitimate connections to the mail server, and is comprised of the following:

*SMTP Validation:* Identifies unwanted email originating from known spam and virus sending sources, where the source can unequivocally be identified as an open proxy or a botnet, and rejects the connection accordingly. In February, on average 4.3% of inbound messages were intercepted from botnets and other known malicious sources and rejected as a consequence.

*Registered User Address Validation:* Reduces the overall volume of emails for registered domains, by discarding connections for which the recipients are identified as invalid or non-existent. In February, on average 13.4% of recipient addresses were identified as invalid; these were attempted directory attacks upon domains that were therefore prevented.

The table below details the current impact of connection management techniques on unwanted email volume being measured by MessageLabs Intelligence.

Region	Connection Management	
	SMTP Validation (botnet sources)	User Validation (directory attacks)
USA	3.6%	13.6%
UK	5.2%	12.0%
Europe	4.7%	17.8%
Asia Pacific	4.2%	3.3%
<b>Worldwide</b>	<b>4.3%</b>	<b>13.4%</b>

*Effects of Connection Management Techniques*

**MessageLabs** is the world's leading provider of email security and management services with more than 13,000 clients.

MessageLabs Intelligence is a respected source of data and analysis for email security issues, trends and statistics. MessageLabs provides a range of information on global email security threats based on live data feeds from its control towers around the world.

For further information on MessageLabs Intelligence, please visit [www.messagelabs.com/intelligence](http://www.messagelabs.com/intelligence) and register to receive regular alerts and reports.